

SUP/201

From: Wendy Waddington
Sent: 30 May 2018 23:19
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Proposed Rother Valley Railway extension to link Bodiam to mainline connection at Robertsbridge Junction

To the Secretary of State for Transport

Dear Mr Grayling

I write to you in support of the TWA Order for this extension.

As a local resident of some 15 years, living two miles from the Robertsbridge station site (and a retired London commuter) I am strongly in favour of this initiative, as I really believe that it will bring a very significant benefit to the local community; both as an amenity in itself, and in respect of the resulting improved prospects for local employment.

Employment opportunities will arise both directly through the Kent and East Sussex Railway/Rother Valley Railway companies and through the resulting expansion to the local economy due to the draw of the newly extended line as a tourist attraction in itself and as a means to reach other existing local tourist attractions - e.g. the National Trust's Bodiam Castle, Great Dixter Gardens at Northiam.

This final, long-awaited connection of the KESR to the main Southeastern Trains London to Hastings service at Robertsbridge will allow village communities at all KESR station stops to access this mainline service with its fast regular trains between London Charing Cross and Hastings, via Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, and Tunbridge Wells. Separately it will also allow residents in the immediate Robertsbridge area to access villages along the KESR service. Personally I will certainly use the KESR to shop in Tenterden, and to visit Christopher Lloyd's world-class garden at Great Dixter in Northiam - both of these are reached more conveniently and pleasantly via rail than the current very indirect 45 and 30 minute car journeys.

In addition, and probably more significantly in respect of its benefits to the local economy, this extension of the KESR to connect to the mainline service will allow large numbers of visitors from London to directly reach the KESR line and the immediate Robertsbridge area by train, and with additional obvious attendant benefits to the environment.

I believe the vast majority of the local community to be as strongly in favour of this development as I am, and understand that about the only body of objectors to this initiative are the community of bikers who travel to Hastings each year to visit its famous Mayday weekend 'Jack-in-the-Green' celebrations, and who have been personally approached by one of the two directly affected local landowners to record their objections in a petition to the single proposed new KESR level crossing on the A21, close to the Salehurst roundabout. These biker visitors certainly do bring benefits to the local Hastings/St Leonards economy and I am in favour of this event, but they do also cause significant noisy disruption to residents all along the A21 and its immediate area for the whole of that weekend and the occasional biker fatality results every few years from the sheer volume of road traffic they create on an already very busy Bank holiday weekend. As a direct result some local businesses on the A21 specifically close every year on that Bank Holiday

Monday because they know their regular customers to be so disinclined to visit their premises by car because of the traffic hazard the sheer volume of bikers causes.

And yet we local residents do live very amicably with the A21 bikers - so surely a policy of 'live-and-let-live' would seem to be equitable here.

Finally, I simply do not subscribe to the argument that the addition of the level crossing (with its maximum of 10 crossing operations per day) will bring an intolerable obstruction to road traffic on the A21 at Salehurst. A long-standing pedestrian-controlled crossing is already located only 100 metres north of the Salehurst roundabout specifically to allow Salehurst school children to walk to Robertsbridge school - this is a far greater obstruction and an equally justified one.

yours sincerely

Wendy Waddington
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